

Abstract

Process for the preparation of optically highly pure (R)- and (S)- α -hydroxycarboxylic acids, in which either isolated, impure (R)- and (S)- α -hydroxycarboxylic acids prepared by acidic hydrolysis of the (R)- and (S)-cyanohydrins obtained by enzyme-catalyzed addition of a cyanide group donor to the corresponding aldehydes or ketones are recrystallized in an aromatic hydrocarbon, optionally in the presence of a cosolvent, and optically highly pure (R)- and (S)- α -hydroxycarboxylic acids having an optical purity of over 98%ee are obtained or the hydrolysis solution obtained by acidic hydrolysis of the (R)- and (S)-cyanohydrins is treated directly with an aromatic hydrocarbon, optionally in combination with a cosolvent, and is then extracted at hydrolysis temperature, whereupon after cooling of the organic phase the corresponding chemically and optically highly pure (R)- and (S)- α -hydroxycarboxylic acids having an optical purity of over 98%ee crystallize out.

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